



The Virginia Saltwater Review

*Plans and Statistics Department
2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor
Newport News, VA 23607-0756
<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>*

Vol. 21, No. 14
September 21, 2007

by

Plans and Statistics Staff

NOTE: THE SALTWATER REVIEW WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 28 OR OCTOBER 5, 2007, DUE TO THE VMRC STAFF PARTICIPATION AT THE STATE FAIR OF VIRGINIA (SEPT. 27 THROUGH OCT. 7, SEE PAGE 11 FOR MORE INFORMATION).

THE SALTWATER REVIEW WILL RETURN ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2007.

OVERVIEW

The winds of the past week can be characterized as north. North, northwest, northeast, name a northerly wind, and sometime in the past week it has been part of a forecast. The good news is the fall run has begun! Spot, red drum (puppy and bulls), flounder, and many other species, are on the move. Find the right place in the lee of the wind, or your favorite pier, and take advantage of the fall bounty!

The new state record Croaker, caught by Norman Jenkins, has been examined. (Drum Roll Please). It was a healthy male, and only 8 years old! Go to pages 7 and 8 to see the updated press release for more information, including a photo of the otolith section that VMRC and ODU staff used to determine the age of the fish, and the original press release.

FINAL REMINDER! The Virginia Marine Resources Commission invites public comment on three conservation options, designed to reduce harvest in the 2007 Fall Chesapeake Area Recreational Striped Bass Fishery. According to the National Marine Fisheries Service, the 2006 recreational harvest of striped bass was 2,425,547 pounds. The 2007 recreational striped bass quota is 1,554,302 pounds. That means there is a difference of 871,245 pounds between the most recent recreational harvest and current recreational quota. Go online and register to vote on one of the three proposed options at WWW.VASALTWATERJOURNAL.COM. The online poll will end at 5:00 p.m. Monday, September 24, and the results of the poll will be provided to the Commission during the public hearing on Tuesday, September 25, 2007.

Chincoteague -

Flounder are beginning to move in, according to Donna at Captain Bob's. They are being landed in front of Little Beach, in the Assateague Channel, and in the area of Assateague Point, although the throw back ratio is roughly 9 to 1. With patience, anglers can catch a keeper. The Subway Cars have continued to produce flounder and spadefish, as well as some triggerfish. Most of the croaker have moved out, but a few stragglers in the 16 to 17 inch range were caught in front of Inlet View Campground last week. Bluefish (snapper blues) continue to be caught off of the surf, and some spot are lingering. Wahoo are being caught at the Norfolk Canyon. Staff at Captain Bob's is looking forward to a good weekend with high temperatures and nice fishing weather.

Wachapreague -

At the Wachapreague Marina, flounder fishing is picking up. Most have been caught near Cedar Island, and some very large croakers have been landed in that area as well. Numerous marlin are being caught offshore, while tuna fishing remains slow. No citations were reported this week.

According to Debbie at Captain Zed's, the windy conditions are preventing boaters from venturing out. Those who do are catching some nice flounder mixed with croaker, bluefish, and spot. Offshore action has been slow due to the weather, and anglers are reporting red drum landings bayside.

Cape Charles -

Windy conditions are keeping a lot of anglers onshore at Chris' Bait and Tackle. The catch this week was primarily flounder, and anglers are finding a lot of them near Kiptopeke. Flounder citations for the week include two (10 lbs 15 oz and 9 lbs 3 oz) caught by Kyle Dellinger at buoy 18, and a 7 lb 8 oz by Talma Dellinger also at Buoy 18. Corbett Johnson landed a 9 lb 2 oz flounder, and Jacob Kay and Phillip Johnson both landed citation flounder (7 lbs 7 oz and 7 lb 6 oz) from the pier at Kiptopeke. There were also two citation speckled trout releases (25 inches and 24 ½ inches) by Bernie Rolley.

Ernie at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle reported that crabbing has been good off of the pier, but most anglers are still waiting for speckled trout to arrive. Speckled trout are currently being caught at Smith Beach and Hungars Creek. The biggest fish of the week was a citation croaker weighing 4 lbs 2 oz caught by Porferio Pasia of New Jersey from the pier at Cherrystone.

Onancock –

Captain Wil reports that windy conditions have kept fishing to a minimum this week. However, the water quality has increased quite a bit from previous weeks. Flounder fishing has improved, and croaker and spot are biting. There are plenty of fish around, but anglers have to look around to find them. A few red drum and speckled trout are still showing up. Captain Wil is hoping for some nice fall fishing with larger flounder and the striped bass season coming up.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel –

Cobb's Marina reports very little activity. Because of windy conditions and small craft advisories, no boats have left the marina since last Thursday.

At Wallace's Bait and Tackle, a citation cobia (70 lbs) was reported caught at Cape Henry using live eel. Windy conditions kept most anglers in this week.

Staff at Sunset Boating Center reported no activity due to wind and weather.

As with other lower bay areas, Salt Ponds Marina witnessed very little fishing last week. According to staff, the fish have been saved this week!

Anglers are catching spot at Gloucester Point Pier, according to staff at York River Fishing Center. Fishing there this week has tapered off due to windy conditions over the past week.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

This northeast blow is a signal of change. The fantastic cobia and marlin fishing should be on the down swing now. Other fisheries will pick up. This blow signals the beginning of the fall spot run. The red drum bite has turned on. The run of big reds at the Sandbridge pier is on. Red drum continue to be caught in the bay also at places like Bluefish Rock and York Spit. Spanish mackerel are available at Cape Henry. Spanish mackerel, king mackerel and false albacore are available at the Chesapeake Light Tower. Drop a live croaker down and you have a good chance of hooking up with a big jack crevalle or amberjack. When it settles down, flounder fishing should be excellent along the Chesapeake Channel (Baltimore Channel) at the mouth of the bay. The fall speckled trout run should start to take off now. Look for fish on Poquoson Flats and inside of Back River. Offshore, billfish will continue to be caught, but more wahoo and tuna will enter the mix.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

Wind, wind, and more wind. A week of blustery conditions along the East coast will make things interesting this weekend when anglers finally get a break in the weather. Many will head out in search of straggling cobia and big red drum.

Cobia are still a possibility, but not for long. Look for fish in pods on the surface heading south, as well as fish hanging on buoys. But the big event of late is still the "Run of the Bulls." Each year as the big red drum migrate down the eastern shoreline, surf and pier anglers have their big chance at hooking one of these prized fighters. This event debuted last week, with dozens of bull reds already caught off the Little Island Fishing Pier, and off the beach from Sandbridge, down to False Cape. The northeast blow has made conditions perfect for targeting big red drum, which thrive in a disturbed wash. Spot heads, cut mullet, and cut bunker are the baits of choice. Red drum are also available along the lower bay shoals, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and the barrier islands along the Eastern Shore.

If puppy drum (juvenile red drum) is your passion, look among the breaking waves along Sandbridge,

where pups up to 27-inches are favoring offerings of cut mullet on a fish finder rig. Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlet are also providing outstanding puppy drum action on jigs and cut bait. Reports of speckled trout up to 22-inches are coming from inside Lynnhaven Inlet, as well as Rudee, where a smattering of grey trout are also around. Specks are also available in Hungar's Creek.

Surf casters are looking forward to a great season, with croaker, spot, sea mullet, bluefish, puppy drum (juvenile red drum), and striped bass making a showing in the wash. This action will only improve as the fall season progresses.

Bloodworms are flying off the shelves since the spot scene exploded this week. Spot are on fire, with nice fish swarming within lower bay protected areas, inlets, and rivers. Anglers are pulling spot in as fast as they can from all the favorite locations such as Ocean View, Lynnhaven Inlet, Rudee Inlet, Willoughby, and the Oceanfront Piers. Hundreds of respectable fish hit the deck at the Little Island Fishing Pier, filling coolers for elated bottom-bouncers. The best action for the bigger spot is still yet to come, as the yellowbellies should show soon. Croaker are schooling around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and within Lynnhaven and Rudee inlets, where a few large croaker are falling to squid and shrimp.

Flounder continue to gather at the mouth of the bay, where the anglers braving the weather are finding good luck off Kiptopeke and around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. This is the time of year drift anglers score well along deeper channels and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Good catches of keeper flat fish are also coming from within Lynnhaven, where anglers have been congregating in protected waters to avoid the weather. Nice fish are collecting on inshore and offshore wrecks, along with good sized black sea bass and trigger fish.

Small stripers, small grey trout, and scattered bluefish, are around the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, especially at night.

Spanish mackerel, false albacore, and small kingfish are hitting trolled baits at the Chesapeake Light Tower. Big barracuda are also cruising the tower, with jack crevalle still a possibility. Large king mackerel are patrolling from the Chesapeake Light Tower down to False Cape, while schools of false albacore are roaming the same vicinities, which are a blast on light tackle.

Once the waters calm offshore, the prospect of good billfish action will entice boats to head to deep water, where the fish were in 500 fathoms and deeper before the blow. Nice yellowfin tuna are possible, with some fish pushing 70-pounds. False albacore are starting to become more abundant around the Fingers, and near the weather buoy. Wahoo of all sizes are a good bet with planers and dark-colored lures between the Canyon and the Cigar area in about 30 fathoms.

Virginia Middle Bay -

Roger Wilkins of Jett's Hardware reports that the catch of the day is bluefish, and lots of them. You can catch them by trolling by areas where they are working the surface or just blind trolling. There are still a good number of spot hanging around but it appears that the croakers have moved out of the area. One good area for spot has been Haynies Hole in the Great Wicomico River. There are still some Spanish mackerel

moving through the area, probably because of the dry weather. If speckled trout is your species of choice they are around but no reports of where they are being caught.

Locklies Marina reports that most of the people fishing their area are going for spot. Still haven't seen the classic fall run but it isn't far off now. People are also finding some gray trout in the deeper holes and bluefish can be caught trolling or floating cut bait. There are some reports of black drum being caught and released around the Whitestone Bridge.

Capt. Jim Thompson of Deltaville, VA contributed the following:

The fish have been in good form during the past week. The spot are beginning to put on some weight and have increased in size over the past two weeks. In the Bay, off Gwynns Island, the catch has been very consistent and spot and trout are steady once you start them feeding. Do this by offering fresh worm in good sizes to attract the fish to the vessel. Once they are there and the feeding call begins, the fish will start fighting to get to the bait. Just remember you need to keep it fresh because once you stop, they are going to go to the next vessel. Deep Rock was great, as were the Cottages and the Hole in the Wall off of Gwynns Island. In the Piankatank River you could find spot and trout at the Mud Hole, Cherry Point, and the Number 5 day marker. The fish were smaller but were acceptable to most of the charters. In the Rappahannock River, you could find spot and trout on the Spike at the mouth of the river and in Butlers Hole off Windmill Point. Marina Channel marker 7 off Sturgeon Bar was great, as was the Lump off the silos, but only on a flood tide. The Spanish mackerel action has been cold this week (the weather has not been favorable to those desired the fish). However, they are there in good numbers, and you can see them jumping out of the water. The weather made fishing difficult, but a good catch was possible if you were patient. No flounder this past week, but a few sharks were caught in the bay.

Virginia Beach -

At the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, no boats have gone out since this weekend due to rough conditions. This Saturday, the trips were successful with several tuna and false albacore. Both white and blue marlin have been caught, and while no sail fish were landed, there have been reports of some in the area. Inshore, bluefish, Spanish mackerel, and croaker are biting around Cape Henry. Staff also mentioned that the boats are gearing up to begin their sea bass trips soon.

According to Paula at Fisherman's Wharf Marina, no boats have gone out over the past week due to the weather. However, some action is planned this week during an overnight tournament.

Virginia Piers -

It looks like the mullet blow we had last weekend is paying off in terms of the spot run. Spot have been showing up in good numbers at the Ocean View Pier this week. No yellow bellies yet, but they are starting to put on some size, and what they lack in size they are making up for in numbers. In addition to the spot there are also some puppy drum making an appearance, as well as croaker.

The Virginia Beach Pier also reports that the spot are running strong. The puppy drum are around, and some are running at decent sizes.

Outer Banks, NC –

The weather continued to be a problem over the past weekend with stiff winds keeping a large number of boats tied to the dock. The boats out of Nags Head that were able to work the offshore areas had success with billfish, but saw the catch rates on big eye tuna drop off. Large king mackerel made a modest showing closer to shore along with good-sized bluefish. Bottom droppers were able to find blueline tilefish, hake, triggerfish, black sea bass, and tautog. People working the inshore areas of the beaches had plenty of small bluefish and some good sized Spanish mackerel. In the inlets and sounds, people were able to catch their limit spotted seatrout and weakfish while working the shallow areas around the marsh islands. Sheepshead and black drum also made an appearance around the structure of the Oregon Inlet Bridge.

People fishing on the Avalon Pier found themselves facing a stiff east to northeast wind most of the weekend. This helped to keep the water temperatures up and the fishing fairly consistent. The end of the pier was producing bluefish and Spanish mackerel, while closer to shore people were finding the spot and mullet bite to be good. Other fish that could be found by those persistent few included puppy drum, speckled trout, and black drum.

South of Oregon Inlet, its beginning to look like fall with finger mullet in the surf. Anticipation is growing as people wait for the water temperature to drop a few more degrees. Outside the breakers, Spanish mackerel and bluefish are jumping, and the bluefish have some size to them. Sea mullet and spot are being caught at the Ramp 43 area, when the wind allows, and puppy drum, flounder, and pompano can be added to the list on South Beach. Behind the island, there are a lot of speckled trout to be found.

The Oregon Inlet Fishing Center hasn't been very active over the weekend, as the wind and swells played havoc for another weekend of fishing. Offshore boats were hit the hardest, and when they could get out, the fishing was tough with only a few big eye tuna, yellowfin tuna, and nine billfish hooked. Sound fishing was the best bet, allowing fishermen to get out of the wind and find flounder, bluefish, croaker, sea mullet, and speckled trout.

Fishermen working out of Hatteras Harbor didn't fare any better for offshore trips as they were almost completely blown out over the weekend. Inshore fishing managed to produce red drum, a few Spanish mackerel, and nice bluefish. Sound fishing had bluefish, speckled trout, and weakfish.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

NEWS RELEASE UPDATE: NEWPORT NEWS, VA. --- A record-smashing Atlantic croaker caught a few weeks ago in the Chesapeake Bay was a healthy male only eight years old, making him middle-aged for his species.

"This boy grew fast. He's the Yao Ming of croakers," said Dr. Cynthia M. Jones, head of Old Dominion University's Fish Age and Growth Laboratory, which today scientifically determined the fish's age. "He is four times the weight of a normal fish of this age."

At 8-lbs. and 11-oz., the fish nicknamed "Big Boy" obliterated the state record for croaker -- the ubiquitous species known for the "croaking" sounds it makes to communicate. The previous croaker record was for a fish that weighed a smidgeon under 6-pounds.

Big Boy was caught by Norman T. Jenkins, 63, of Portsmouth, on Aug. 17. At the time, Mr. Jenkins was fishing in about 30 feet of water near New Point Light in Mathews County using a squid and minnow "sandwich" while fishing for flounder with Sam Brooks on his private boat Wulfkat IV.

Big Boy may also have set a world record. Mr. Jenkins has applied with the International Game Fish Association for the acceptance of his catch as the world all-tackle record for Atlantic croaker. The state record-setter had a length of 27 inches and a girth of 17 inches and was Mr. Jenkins' first catch that warranted a trophy citation from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission.

"This just shows how phenomenal the fishing is here in Virginia," said VMRC Commissioner Steve Bowman. "We're quite happy to award the state record for Big Boy to Mr. Jenkins and we hope he gets the world record for this remarkable catch."

The previous state record had been held by Jim Mitchem of Gwynn, Va., for a fish he caught on October 5, 1982. That croaker was 22 inches long and was caught at the Cell.

ODU scientists spent several hours on Monday partly dissecting Big Boy and removing the otoliths, internal ear bones that grow over time and form yearly rings. Those rings can be counted to determine a fish's age just as tree trunk rings can be used to determine the age of a tree. A thin sliver of one otolith from Big Boy was cut using a precision, diamond-tipped jeweler's saw. When viewed under a high-powered lab microscope, eight rings were clearly visible. This showed the fish was 8-years-old when caught. Great care was taken in determining the age of this particular croaker. A historical record must be kept because Big Boy is so abnormally large for his species. "We may never see another fish like this," said Joe Grist, a VMRC fisheries manager.

The average eight-year-old croaker in Virginia weighs less than two pounds. The oldest croaker ever caught in the state was aged 15. The biggest croaker isn't always the oldest, said Jones, who figures strong genetics and an abundant food supply in Big Boy's first two years of life allowed him to grow so large.

The fish aging lab is partially funded by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and has worked since 1998 to analyze fish to determine individual and species characteristics -- when and where they breed, how they live, what impacts their lives and health, and the ages at which they die. That kind of information is the foundation of wise fisheries management, Jones noted. VMRC is the state regulatory agency that manages recreational and commercial fisheries in Virginia and is charged protecting and conserving the state's marine resources and tidal wetlands. A plastic mold of Big Boy was made and reproductions will be given to Mr.

Jenkins, VMRC and to ODU's fish aging lab. Jones said the plastic rendition of Big Boy will be mounted in the lab's foyer.

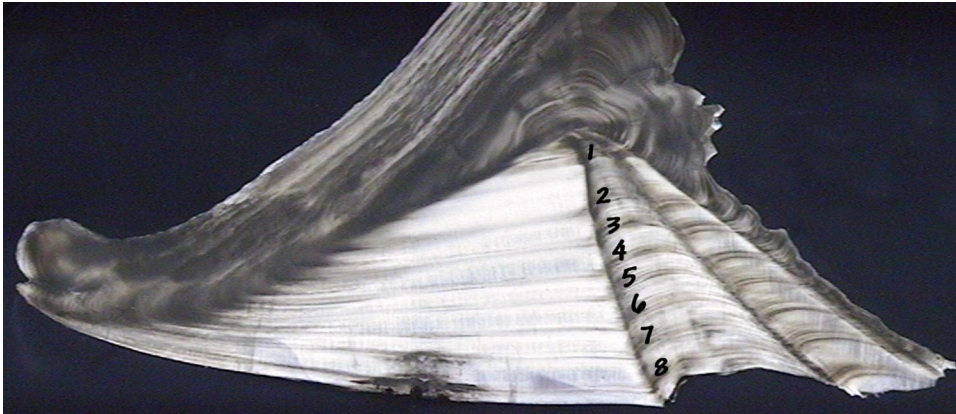


PHOTO OF 8-YEAR OLD STATE RECORD CROAKER OTOLITH SECTION, WITH ANNUAL GROWTH RINGS MARKED (courtesy of Dr. Cynthia M. Jones, head of Old Dominion University's Fish Age and Growth Laboratory)

ORIGINAL PRESS RELEASE FROM AUGUST 27, 2007



VMRC PRESS RELEASE

Norman T. Jenkins of Portsmouth, VA has established a new state record for croaker with an 8 lbs., 11 oz. fish caught August 17th. This smashes the long-standing state record for the species of 5 lbs., 13 oz., which had been set 25 years earlier in October of 1982. Jenkins has filed an application with the International Game Fish Association for acceptance of his Atlantic croaker as the world all-tackle record.

The 63-year-old Jenkins caught his record-setting croaker in about 30 feet of water near New Point Light on a squid and minnow "sandwich" while fishing for flounder with Sam Brooks on his private boat Wulfkat IV. The fish had a length of 27 inches and a girth of 17 inches and was Jenkin's first citation catch.

"This fish is so much larger than any croaker previously caught by any method that many anglers will view it as an anomaly," stated tournament director Claude Bain. "This fish moves the bar substantially higher, and we are anxiously awaiting word from our scientific community about the age of this fish."

The previous state record had been held by Jim Mitchem of Gwynn, VA for the fish he caught on October 5, 1982. Mitchem's croaker measured 22 inches and was caught at the Cell.



ATTENTION SALTWATER ANGLERS! **The Virginia Marine Resources Commission announces the**



Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal

The Fisherman's Journal is a new tool that is intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows the individual angler to keep a record of their fishing experience that can be used to identify successful locations and conditions in the future. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it will benefit fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

Get Hooked and Report at
www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com/main.php>. The page header includes the Virginia Marine Resources Commission logo and the text "Virginia Marine Resources Commission Recreational Fishing Online Reporting". The main content area is titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" and "Welcome Virginia Fisherman,". It features a large graphic of a fish with the text "Virginia Recreational ASSESSMENT PROGRAM" and "FISHMAN'S JOURNAL". Below this, there are two main sections: "Report Trophy Striped Bass" and "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal". The "Report Trophy Striped Bass" section includes a text box for "Regulation 4VAC 20-252-10 ET SEQ. requires all striped bass kept during the trophy season be reported. Recording your trophy striped bass catch in this system meets Virginia's mandatory reporting requirement." and buttons for "Report Entry" and "Reprint Trip". The "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal" section includes a text box explaining the system: "The Fisherman's Journal is a voluntary online reporting system. By recording your catch, you will develop a history of your fishing trips that may help you plan future trips by identifying successful locations and conditions. For each fish reported, you can decide if you want to share your catch data with other members. Additionally, you are helping the VMRC gather anecdotal data of species prevalence in the Chesapeake Bay. Your personal information will not be used or associated to the catch data. Lastly, you don't have to rely on your memory. You can complete this report form during your trip and then enter it online when you return." and buttons for "Journal Entry", "Reprint Trip", and "Reports". At the bottom, there is a "Search Public Data" section with a text box and a button. A "Change Password" button is also visible in the bottom left corner.






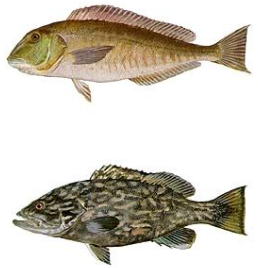



ATTENTION SALTWATER ANGLERS! THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION WANTS YOUR FISH.... TO MEASURE AND AGE



You catch it, you fillet it, but instead of throwing the remains in the trash, please donate them to science.

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TILEFISH AND GROUPER	
TAUTOG			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT TO EACH PARTICIPANT.

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)

Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)



The State Fair of Virginia

September 27 through October 7, 2007

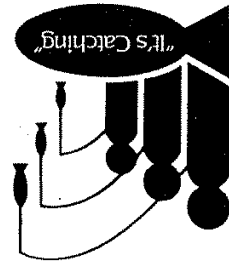
at Richmond Raceway Complex
600 East Laburnum Avenue
Richmond, VA 23222

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

Stop by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's booth to see some well-known, and not so well-known, marine species that populate the state's tidal waters. Horseshoe crabs, oysters and even oyster toads will be on display. So will our newest patrol boat. It's fast. Experts in our Fisheries, Habitat and Law Enforcement Divisions will explain more about an agency that has proudly served the Commonwealth for more than 100 years.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

TAKE A FRIEND FISHING



FISHERIES PLANS/STATISTICS OFFICE
VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
2600 WASHINGTON AVE., 3RD FLOOR
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

Practice

CAREFUL CATCH

REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water